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ABSTRACT

A study investigated the process used in evaluating student teachers of English as a foreign language (TEFL) during the practicum period, in an effort to assess and improve the supervision process. Subjects were 34 student teachers from Kuwait University practice-teaching in intermediate and secondary schools. The students' evaluation was conducted over three 1-month periods for guidance, development, and assessment. They were observed for evidence of 36 competencies in five categories: personal qualities; language/linguistic knowledge; interpersonal competence; planning; and classroom implementation. Student gender, number of students, student-teacher's educational status (undergraduate or graduate), and teaching load were also considered. Results indicate that all categories of competence were significantly correlated with each other. It was also found that students' progress was achieved largely at the end of the first period and only marginally at the end of the third period, suggesting some crystallization of competencies through the student teaching process. Recommendations are made for further research. Contains 30 references. (MSE)

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Evaluation of Student - Teachers' Performance in TEFL Practicum At Kuwait University

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ABSTRACT : The study discusses the practicum of EFL student-teachers for intermediate and secondary schools. It focuses on the steps followed in conducting their evaluation in Kuwait. The necessary competencies inside the classroom were investigated utilizing an evaluation format consisting of 36 competencies divided into five categories viz, personal qualities, linguistic/language, inter-personal relationship, planning and implementation.

The sample consisted of EFL student - teachers in fall 1994 / 95 who were practicing teaching in intermediate and secondary schools. The students' evaluation was carried out over three one-month consecutive periods for guidance, development and assessment.

The findings reveal that all the categories of competencies are significantly correlated with each other, hence identified as components of TP evaluation.

The findings also indicate that the students' progress is achieved mostly at the end of the first period and only marginally at the end of the third period hence the crystallization of competencies through induction has been fulfilled to some extent. The paper concludes with recommendations for further research.

Introduction

Improvement of the educational system requires continuous review to enhance its internal competencies. Many avenues can be explored to achieve this, including selection of more competent inputs, better organization and appropriate expertise. The teacher constitutes an important element in any educational system; hence the concern with his preparation and training.

The techniques followed during teacher training have been emphasized in analyzing the basic competencies required for the

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teaching profession. Attempts have been made to identify these competencies through observing teachers in class and inferring what is required. Others have relied on assessing the factors indicated by research studies.

This study aims to analyses the major findings of relevant research to the subject, concentrating on EFL teaching competencies and evaluate the consecutive development of student-teachers' level in these competencies during the teaching practice program (TP)*. Evaluation is divided into three periods : initial, middle and final, in order to specify the role of TP in the preparation of trainee - candidates.

Conceptual and Comparative Background

Foreign-language teacher education has become a topical issue. The need for qualified personnel has never been greater (Ullmann & Hainsworth, 1991:486-496). The difficulty in meeting this need has prompted educators to reflect on the nature of the competencies FL teachers ought to possess and the effective ways of developing them. It is approximately twenty years since the start of careful consideration of teaching competencies (Adlan, 1980 : 205-231). In the mid-seventies a competence-based teacher education program was initiated to replace the conventional teaching practice program which was solely based on students' observation and practice teaching. The new program has the advantage of relying on a number of specific competencies suitable for group or individual teacher preparation in which students' performance is considered the major criterion for success (Issa & AL-Khayat, 1987:70-109).Universities are now paying increasing attention to the quality of teaching. The FL teacher education programs are aimed at assisting student-teachers acquire and practice a number of teaching competencies required for their future teaching career (Al-Katheery, 1987: 33-69). Faculties of Education offer a number of professional courses relating to curriculum, educational psychology and methods of FL teaching. The practicum or teaching practice is the central component, since the student-teacher has a chance to apply knowledge and skills gained during the theoretical study through the process of teaching a class of the learners and receiving feedback.

Teaching for language proficiency has recently assumed critical importance in the profession. Preparing pre - service FL

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* **Practicum and TP are employed interchangeably .**

teachers with this orientation has become a central part of the responsibilities of the teacher education program (Murdoch, 1994: 253-265; Cullen, 1994: 162-172). Before the practicum, the student-teachers could not judge whether their command of FL would be adequate enough to sustain instruction in a FL class. Teaching practice plays a crucial role in this respect, since that is where they will learn if they can survive in a classroom and function as FL teachers (Mellgren & Lange, 1988:121-129).

Broadly speaking, there are two types of FL pre-service teacher education programs: concurrent and consecutive. The concurrent model is developed in tandem with the FL teacher education program. Candidates are enrolled in general (arts) undergraduate courses and in pedagogy courses simultaneously. At the end of four years, they receive B.Ed degrees. In the consecutive model, candidates complete their B.A. or B.Sc. program and then enroll (usually for three semesters) in an Ed program of pedagogy courses. Such movement of teacher education program from an undergraduate to a post-graduate structure emphasises awareness of the process of teaching. The student-teacher becomes aware of his/her actual teaching, the application of theory to practice and the role of teacher as researcher (Mellgren & Lange, 1988:121-129).

It has been argued that pre-service teacher education should include an induction period during which a beginning teacher has a reduced teaching load and is supervised by experienced colleagues (Fullan & Connelly, 1987). This would extend initial teacher education beyond the university setting, hence creating a continuum between pre-service and in- service teacher education. Such a procedure has been experimented with in Ontario, in 1989. A special program was set up to include 80 hours of immersion classes, one three-week practicum and a two-week follow-up after the pre-service program ended. Responses by student-graduates indicated that they had benefited greatly during practicum; however they only began to put it together during the two-week post-course induction period. They also emphasized that absence of the pressure of evaluation during the practicum helped them to relax and implement their teaching adequately. (Majhanovich & Gray, 1992: 682-694).

A project led by Burgess and Briscoe (1994:19-26) was planned to map students' conceptions of teaching and how they change during their undergraduate studies. The data was gathered by addressing two questions to 122 student-teachers at Curtain

University in West Australia. The question "what is teaching?" was posed to first year students . The second question, asked at the end of their practicum was "How have your idea about teaching changed and what influenced the changes?" Most of them initially reported that teaching was a straightforward activity based on telling, transmitting knowledge or informing the students of facts. Later in their training the students' ideas changed considerably . They indicated that teaching was a more complex activity than they had originally thought; which involved many aspects besides the simple transmission of information.

Al-Farra (1993: 148-177) distributed a questionnaire to Science and Math' student-teachers after completing their teaching practice program in Sanaa University, Yemen. The aim was to identify the problems they encountered in practicum. The study concluded that shortage of time allocated for practicing inside the class constituted a major problem as this would only enable them to visit schools one day per week. Consequently, trainees were unable to teach more than five lessons throughout the semester.

Sabir (1989: 270-310) initiated a study at the College of Education in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, to ascertain the views of the supervisors about the achievement of the practicum objectives and the problems that they face. She found that the program was beset by a number of problems. These included the insufficient time allotted for training and the dissatisfaction felt by student-trainees with evaluation procedures.

In 1988 Badi (1989:311-388) carried out a study investigating Arabic writing as one of the linguistic competencies of student-trainees at the University of Om Al-Qura in Saudi Arabia. He studied the techniques that the trainees used in correcting the writings of pupils at the intermediate schools. Six hundred notebooks were included as a sample with ten notebooks per student-teacher. Each notebook included a topic that the pupils had written. The study concluded that the student-teachers could not identify the written and the grammatical errors in a correct manner. They were also unable to classify the writing mistakes accurately. The result was predictable : insufficient preparation of lessons' and poor planning .

A study detecting changes in some aspects of student-teachers classroom behaviour was undertaken in Saudi Arabia. The aim was to compare pre-assessment and post-assessment scores of candidates in nine teaching competencies (Badr & Al-Shabbi, 1990: 1-14). An evaluation sheet including skills such as lesson planning,

use of audio - visual aids, questioning and pupils' interaction, was applied on EFL student-teachers at the beginning and end of their teaching practice period at King Saud University, Abha. Significant differences were found between practice teachers' scores in post-assessment and their scores in pre-assessment on each of the nine competencies. The conclusion was that TP had a positive role in developing and improving the teaching skills of EFL student-teachers.

The interaction in an ESL teaching practicum in providing opportunities for student-teachers to change their teaching behavior was the subject of a study of student-teachers teaching in an ESL program in New York City (Gebhard, 1990: 118-131). The majority of students changed some aspects of their teaching behavior while participating in the sixteen-week practicum. These competencies that changed included the setting up and carrying out lesson, use of classroom space, selection of content and treatment of student's language errors.

The question of how far practicum affected the teachers' performance after graduation was investigated by Attya (1982: 1-9). The standard of performance of EFL teachers who graduated from Faculties of Education was compared with that of EFL student-teachers while undertaking their practicum course at Ain Shams University, in Egypt. An observation check-list comprising a number of teaching competencies was employed to observe 38 student-teachers and 42 EFL teachers. Two thirds of the student-teachers could not speak English fluently, compared with 87% of teachers. The difference was attributed to the improper preparation of students at school, and to the intensive use of Arabic by teachers in class. The study also concluded that most candidates lacked educational and professional competencies related to the proper use of teaching methods and the preparation of daily lessons.

Another study by Gami (1986: 121-153) at the Teacher Training Institute in Kuwait contrasted the effectiveness of first TP program with that of the second TP program, on students' acquisition of competencies required for teaching at the primary stage. An observation format consisting of five teaching competencies, namely lesson planning, lessons implementation, academic and professional competencies, teacher-pupil relationship and evaluation - was applied on two groups of students selected randomly. The group attending the second practice program benefited more in acquiring teaching competencies than the first

group. However, no significant differences emerged between the two groups regarding evaluation competency.

In the Fall of 1986/87, Al - Shalabi (1988: 75-98) conducted an evaluative study on EFL pre-service program at Kuwait University. An observation sheet consisting of 36 language and teaching competencies was employed to evaluate the linguistic competence and classroom performance of EFL student-teachers. The majority (80%) of candidates obtained distinctive ratings in the teaching competencies, but their scores on language competencies were unfavorable. This was underlined by the students' suggestion to introduce more courses in English grammar and conversation to upgrade their English. Research also indicates that the greatest influences on pre-service teachers' behavior are, first their language learning experiences and second their student-teaching experiences (Glisan & Sullivan, 1993: 217-225).

Moeller (1989: 445-456) sums up the findings of previous research that few institutions provide student-teachers with an objective evaluation of their language proficiency and teaching competencies.

A number of remarks may be concluded from the previous literature. These previous studies have dealt with topics such as the problems faced by student-teachers, change of their linguistic competence and classroom behavior, during teaching practice. The methods employed in such studies were based on cross-sectional and cross-sequential approaches. The present study depends on assessing the sample over three consecutive periods. Such approach yeilds more robust conclusions.

In view of renewed interest in FL education, and more specifically in EFL education in Kuwait, the Faculty of Education has to examine its TP program offerings to ensure the quality of teacher education. The following sections will discuss the practicum of EFL teacher-candidates for intermediate and secondary stages and the steps followed in conducting their evaluation. The aim is to investigate the effect of TP on EFL student-teachers' acquisition of the necessary competencies inside the classroom.

The provision of competencies and educational expertise to the student-teacher usually falls on the academic supervisor who can guide him to improve his performance. The EFL academic supervisors at Kuwait University have hitherto relied on a uniform observation format (prepared in Arabic and employed for all Faculty of Education Students) to assess the EFL student-teachers' level of competencies. The present study has thus been undertaken to assess their competencies during practicum, and identify methods that ensure an effective practicum program and the prior preparation for it.

The TEFL practicum in the Faculty of Education at Kuwait University accounts for 12 credit units. It includes one full term (usually Fall semester) plus a seminar whereby students can discuss with the Faculty staff issues raised during their training at the intermediate or secondary schools. Student-teachers are required to complete 90 out of 132 credit units before registering in the TP program. They must also complete courses on TEFL methods and educational technology, to correspond with purpose of TP. Such courses enable student-teachers to acquire practical competencies complementary with theoretical knowledge before taking up full responsibilities as teachers. Churukian (1992) has asserted in this regard that "TP has the advantage of assisting in bridging the gap between theory and practice".

A major component of the TP is class observation by student-teachers. They visit classes for one or two weeks prior to practicing teaching, in order to familiarize themselves with the classroom environment and observe the types of activities they could expect during their practicum. This period is followed by three one-month consecutive periods of EFL teaching in a regular classroom, to practice the concepts the student-teachers have already studied.

Student-teachers' supervision, evaluation and guidance during TP are a collaborative effort involving both cooperating teachers, Faculty of Education staff (and) or supervisors seconded by the Ministry of Education, together with the school administrators. They form a supervisory triad as they all provide the trainees with the required competencies in the initial period. Their evaluation of student-teachers performance will assist in identifying skills that require particular attention in the remaining periods of teaching practice. The student-teachers are subsequently able to review and compare all comments from the various observers. At the same time supervisors can review comments by each other in an attempt to

come to conclusion in giving coherent feedback to student-teachers (Mellegren & Caye, 1989: 553-561). The general criteria on which student-teachers are evaluated is competence in the subject field. In the case of EFL teacher-candidates this is also interpreted as meaning competence in the oral and written aspects of the language.

EFL student-teachers are observed by the above - mentioned evaluators for purposes of training, development and assessment (Maingay, 1988: 118-131). These evaluators can thus assess the student-teachers' progress by setting out observable criteria for change and a time period within which it can be achieved (Freeman, 1989: 27-45). That is, they observe trainee-candidates while trying out some of the procedures they themselves have observed or have been told about. As a result of this intervention, they receive feedback telling them the standard of performance. This will subsequently guide them towards more appropriate classroom behavior than they have shown (Freeman, 1990: 103-117).

Statement of the Problem

While emphasis has been placed on providing adequate practice teaching and systematic observation, little attention is paid to the process of evaluation and feedback. Lack of systematic concentration on language and teaching competencies of EFL student-teachers during the TP program has led to an unreliable system of evaluation on the part of the supervisory triad. High grades are consistently granted to the majority of teacher-candidates due to lack of detailed components of evaluation. On this basis, the Ministry of Education excludes the Faculty of Education outputs from its in-service programs on the ground that they have acquired satisfactory level of competencies. However, both personal experience and research findings indicate that a substantial number of EFL teachers, graduating from the Faculty of Education, are incompetent in their language and teaching skills (AL-Mutawa,1994: 33-63) This is consistent with the results indicated by a previous study (AL-Shalabi, 1988: 75-98).

Language evaluation is based on an inherent idea that TP is more effective than lecturing in raising student-teachers' linguistic competencies, especially classroom English. Yet the question still persists on how and when such effectiveness is significant. In order to examine this phenomenon the following questions are addressed by the study:

1.Can TEFL competencies be identified through TP?

2. Was the TP program effective on EFL student-teachers performance?

1. Are there changes in the student-teachers' competencies?
2. Are these differences in such competencies between the different periods of evaluation influenced by demographic variables (i.e. school, teaching load and type of student-teachers) ?

Significance of the Study:

The significance of the study arises from the following considerations:

1. Highlighting areas of weakness and strength in EFL pre-service program with special emphasis on the practicum component.
2. Identifying areas through which the current EFL practicum programs can be developed and improved.
3. Suggesting pertinent criteria of teaching competencies for student-teaching evaluation during the practicum.

Definitions

Teacher competency : is defined as the study of specific knowledge or ability, which is believed to be important to succeed as a teacher. This applies to the competencies of personal qualities, language, inter-personal relationship, planning and implementation which are measured in the tool below.

Teacher performance: is defined as what the teacher does on the job in terms of behavior and under a specified set of conditions. How well a teacher performs depends in part on how competent the teacher is said to be (Pennington & Young 1989: 619-643).

Sample :

The sample for this study consisted of 34 EFL student-teachers, who were registered for the teaching practice course in the Faculty of Education, Kuwait University in the Fall semester of academic year 1994/95. The majority of students (85%) enrolled in this program are female. As indicated in Table (I) 82% practiced teaching in intermediate schools. As for the teaching load, twenty six student-teachers were practicing for 5-7 periods a week, while only 5 candidates undertook 2-4 periods per week. It may be added that distribution of periods among student-teachers is subject to the school s vacancies and regulations. This procedure enables some student-teachers to handle one class while others are allowed two or three periods per week only. The wide variation in time of actual

practice will inevitably reflect on students' acquisition of competencies.

Table (1)
Distribution of Sample

Independent Variables		No.	%
School	Intermediate	28	82
	Secondary	6	18
Type of Student-Teacher	Undergraduate	30	88
	Postgraduate (Diploma)	4	12
Teaching Load	2 - 4	5	15
	5 - 7	26	76
	8 - 11	3	9

Methodology :

The methodology was based on a survey of previous research and extended class observations of EFL student-teachers in other TP programs. The researchers were also members of a Committee for TEFL evaluation which offered them the opportunity to observe teachers in-service and to identify a list of relevant competencies.

The study utilized an observation format consisting of 36 competencies. The provisional draft of the tool was reviewed by a number of educationalists and EFL Supervisors. Their suggestions for modifications were incorporated in the final version, which is divided into five
broad groups of competencies as follows:

1. Personal qualities, items 1 - 4.
2. Language/linguistic knowledge, items 5 - 9.
3. Inter-personal relations, items 10 -14
4. Planning, items 15 - 20
5. Implementation items 21 - 36 (See Appendixes).

The tool also included variables relating to sex, number of pupils in class, type of student-teacher (undergraduate or post-graduate) and the teaching load. Its five point-scale ranged from (4) Very Good to (3) Good, (2) Fair, (1) Weak and (0) Unobserved. The accepted level of competency was defined as (3) and over.

The study depended, for the instrument validity, on representing competencies adopted by workers in that field. The tool has also been subjected to evaluation by a group of eight specialists in psycholinguistics and methodology. Inter-jury validity rate ranged from 80% to 100%.

The reliability of the tool was obtained through inter-raters conformity quotient of (0.89). Five EFL Inspectors co-operated with the researchers as raters in the initial application. In addition Cronbach Alpha was calculated as (0.93) for the first period of evaluation, (0.95) for the second and (0.96) for the third period, implying high internal consistency.

Administration

The student-teachers under study were divided into groups of three to four with each group placed in either an intermediate or a secondary school close to students' residential area. Five EFL Inspectors seconded from the Ministry of Education collaborated with the researchers in observing and evaluating the student-teachers during their practicum in Fall semester of 1994-95 academic year. Each supervisor was paying weekly (or bi-monthly) visits to one or two groups of student-teachers for observation, discussion and guidance. Student-teachers' evaluation was carried out over three periods at the end of October, November and December. Each teacher-candidate was thus evaluated three times during the practicum course. The supervisors throughout the periods of evaluation employed the observation format, developed by the researchers.

Results

In answer to the first question whether TEFL competencies can be identified through TP evaluation, correlation matrix between the five categories of competencies was calculated. Findings reveal that all the categories are significantly correlated with each other and with the total score, indicating high internal consistency, Table (2). Results also show that the five categories of competencies can be identified as components of TP evaluation. However, this does not necessarily imply that they are the only categories to be considered for TP evaluation, but that they can be relied on for this type of evaluation. Such highly significant positive correlation does not also mean that we can dispense with any of them, since each is concerned with a specific aspect of teaching practice.

Table (2)

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Inter - Scale Correlation Among the Five Categories of Competencies

No	Competencies	Pers. Quality	Lang./ Ling	Int.Per. Rel	Planning	Implem.	Total
1	Personal Qualities	1.00					
2	Language/Ling.	.77**	1.00				
3	Inter-Pers -Relat	.75**	.68**	1.00			
4	Planning	.73**	.78**	.74**	1.00		
5	Implementation	.76	.86	.77	.91	1.00	
6	Total	.87**	.91**	.86**	.93**	.95**	1.00

Concerning the second research question relating to TP effectiveness on EFL student-teachers' performance, t-test was utilized Results reveal significant differences in students' performance between the first and third periods, Table (3). However, some competencies are developed faster than others. All trainee-candidates have passed the criteria set for purpose of the study i.e. 3.00 (Good), regarding the competencies of personal qualities, language and inter-personal relationship at the end of the first period. Yet planning and implementation categories remained below the threshold since substantial practice is needed to acquire them satisfactorily

Table (3)
Pairwise Sample t-test
for Competencies According to First and Third Periods.

	Period	FIRST			THIRD			
	Competencies	NO	M	SD	NO	M	SD	t
1	Personal Qualities	34	3.50	.43	34	3.70	.35	4.59***
2	Language/Ling.	33	3.05	.58	33	3.29	.50	3.63***
3	Inter-Pers.-Relat	33	3.18	.50	33	3.53	.40	5.05***
4	Planning	32	2.71	.48	32	3.35	.60	7.38***
5	Implementation	29	2.88	.49	29	3.40	.47	8.23***

In response to the third inquiry whether there are changes in the student-teachers' competencies, t-test was also used. Findings show significant differences in students' performance in the five categories of competencies between the first and second periods,

Table (4). However, significant differences between the second and third periods were restricted to three categories, namely inter-personal relationship, planning and implementation, indicating the slowing speed in rate of change during this period, Table (5).

Table (4)
Pairwise Sample t-test
for Competencies According to First
and Second Periods

	Period	FIRST			SECOND			t
	Competencies	NO	M	SD	NO	M	SD	
1	Personal Qualities	34	3.50	.43	34	3.63	.45	3.45**
2	Language/Ling	33	3.05	.58	33	3.29	.46	3.46**
3	Inter-Pers - Relat	33	3.20	.49	33	3.41	.43	2.67**
4	Planning	32	2.71	.58	32	3.17	.58	5.74***
5	Implementation	33	2.87	.47	33	3.34	.46	8.09***

* .05 ** .01 *** .001

Table (5)
Pairwise Sample t-test
for Competencies According to Second
and Third Periods

	Period	SECOND			THIRD			t
	Competencies	NO	M	SD	NO	M	SD	
1	Personal Qualities	34	3.63	.45	34	3.70	.35	1.72
2	Language/Ling	33	3.29	.46	33	3.29	.50	.00
3	Inter-Pers-Relat	32	3.41	.43	32	3.55	.39	2.20*
4	Planning	32	3.16	.58	32	3.32	.61	2.43*
5	Implementation	29	3.33	.49	29	3.40	.47	1.57** *

Concerning the fourth research question, namely the relationship between the demographic variables and periods of evaluation, Anova is employed using teaching load for categorization of the sample. Results of planning competencies show that f value was (4.01) in the first period and (3.87) in the third period of evaluation, indicating significant differences Table (6).

The Scheffe range of differences illustrates discrepancies in favor of trainee-candidates teaching 9 to 12 lessons per week over their counterparts undertaking 1 to 4 and 5 to 8 lessons per week during the first period of evaluation, and over those teaching 1 to 4 lessons per week in the third period of evaluation.

Table (6)
f Value of ANOVA of Teaching Load
in the First and Third Periods
of Evaluation Regarding Planning Competencies

Periods of Evaluation	Source of Variance	DF	Sum of Square	M of Square	f	Scheffe
First	Between Groups	2	1.53	.76	4.01	3,1
	Within Groups	30	5.71	.19		3, 2
Third	Between Groups	2	2.44	1.22	3.87	3,1
	Within Groups	30	9.47	.31		

To determine the differences between undergraduate and post-graduate student-teachers, t value was utilized. Significant differences were observed between the two groups regarding the personal qualities at the end of the first period of evaluation. There were also significant differences between the two groups of students with respect to implementation competencies at the end of the second period of evaluation As Table (7) indicates, t value is (3.19) for the personal qualities competencies during the first period of evaluation, while it is (2.11) for implementation competencies during the second period of evaluation. In both categories of competencies the Means of the post-graduate student-teachers (3.93) and (3.54) appear higher than those of their counterparts (3.60) and (3.31) respectively.

Table (7)

13

t - Test of Student Type in the First and Second Periods of Evaluation Regarding PersonalQualities and Implementation Competencies

Competencies	Period	Type of Student	No	M	SD	t
Personal Qualities	First	Undergrad	30	3.60	.467	3.19**
		Post-grad	4	3.93	.125	
Implementation	Second	Undergrad	30	3.31	.47	2.11*
		Post-grad	4	3.54	.12	

With regard to the type of school variable, t-test was also utilized. It reveals significant differences between students practicing in the intermediate and those practicing in the secondary schools. Such significant differences, appearing during the second period of evaluation, comprise three categories of competencies, namely, personal qualities, planning and implementation. The t values of the above three dependent variables (2.30), (2.60) and (2.29) are shown in Table (8)

Table (8)
t-Test of Dependent Variables for the Second Period of Evaluation According to School

Dependent Variables	Independent Variables	No	M	SD	t
Person. Qualities	Intermediate	28	3.58	.47	2.30**
	Secondary	6	3.87	.20	
Planning	Intermediate	27	3.08	.61	2.60**
	Secondary	6	3.47	.22	
Implementation	Intermediate	28	3.29	.48	2.29**
	Secondary	6	3.56	.17	

There are also significant differences between the groups in the third period of evaluation. As illustrated in Table (9) below, t value of personal qualities (3.78), language/linguistics (2.78), and implementation (2.12) are in favor of secondary school trainees.

Table (9)

14

t-Test of Dependent Variables for the Third Period of Evaluation According to School

Dependent Variables	Independent Variables	No	M	SD	t
Person. Qualities	Intermediate	28	3.65	.36	3.78***
	Secondary	6	3.95	.10	
Planning	Intermediate	28	3.23	.51	2.76**
	Secondary	6	3.60	.21	
Implementation	Intermediate	23	3.34	.50	2.12*
	Secondary	6	3.62	.19	

Discussion

The findings thus indicate that the overall progressive change in student-teachers' competencies was achieved by the end of the first period of practicum. The rate of change slowed down during the second period of practice. This is consistent with Freeman's (1989: 270-310) premise that the purpose of the interactive process between student-trainee and supervisor is to generate some form of change in the trainee-candidates. It may be recalled that Freeman also stated that some types of change are open-ended, while others are questionable; that is, they are generally finite and thus can have closure. This was manifested by the degree of change during the third period of evaluation. There were no significant differences as regards personal qualities, language and implementation. But significant differences were observed in student-teachers' performance between the second and third periods of evaluation pertaining to planning and inter-personal relationship competencies. This indicates the slowing speed in rate of improvement during this period, or the crystallization of competencies as induction has been fulfilled to some extent.

It may be pointed out that student-teachers concentrate their efforts towards improving their use of the language in the classroom. They can make rapid progress to improve their competency at the initial stages since they devote little attention on the use of language in its communicative sense. Once they reach a level which they deem adequate for classroom purposes the rate of improvement stagnates, with little or no change being noticed in the subsequent evaluation periods.

Although significant differences exist between undergraduate and post-graduate student-teachers the number of the post-

Conclusions

The aim of the study was to identify the language competencies and skills needed for effective teaching practice. This will hopefully be useful in the future design of the content and instruction in EFL pre-service program in general, and in Kuwait University in particular.

In the existing EFL teacher education program, language proficiency is assessed through credit hours, and teacher competency is judged by the completion of an approved program of courses. But teacher-candidates need to be placed in a teaching field experience, where they are allowed to experiment with the ideas acquired in the methods courses, and not only emulate the model provided by the supervisors. To achieve this objective, the Faculty of Education adopted, since 1985, a term-based TP program lasting 15 weeks to be spent in field experience. The aim is to integrate practice with the methods courses, thereby ensuring effective TP program.

This study sought to evaluate the effectiveness of this program on student teachers' performance. The findings led to the conclusion that the initial period of practicum in TEFL was by and large effective in changing
and improving the student-trainees' performance. Such progress, however, slows down in the subsequent periods. It was also concluded that some competencies are developed faster than others. This is specially true regarding such competencies as personal qualities, language and inter-personal relationship. However, planning and implementation require substantial time and effort to be acquired satisfactorily.

The results of the study also served to underline the importance of the practicum as the cornerstone of a teacher training program (Cameron & Wilson, 1993: 155-167). It is through field teaching and feedback that the student-teacher has a chance to apply knowledge and skills gained during the early career study of the program. In other words, EFL teacher education serves to link what is known in the field with what is done in the classroom (Freeman, 1989: 27-45)

However, although the program generally focuses on the gradual improvement of classroom skills through theoretical study and practice, the special nature of EFL requires considerable language skills and a high degree of cultural awareness before actual teaching begins. The EFL pre-service program has thus to be

examined and better understood if what is being learned through the subject field (EFL) and methodological exploration is to yield fruitful results in teaching practice.

This study offers an alternative approach for evaluating EFL student-teachers' performance during TP. The current practice in the Faculty of Education at Kuwait University is based on the average evaluation of three periods. This results in exaggerating the final grade. However, initial evaluation is based on the notion that students need encouragement in order to progress in their teaching competencies. There is normally insufficient evidence to support all the evaluation made during these periods. Students are thus given the benefit of the doubt with the results that their scores are more than justified by their actual performance. It is only during the final phase of TP that a comprehensive assessment can be made, and a more objective evaluation adopted.

Finally, the following recommendations may be considered to improve practicum in pre-service training EFL programs:

1. An observation format designed for EFL student-teachers can be employed to ensure objective evaluation.
2. A study to identify criteria of linguistic performance is worth conducting for future student-trainees' evaluation.
3. Student-teachers should be trained in observation skills in order for them to appreciate what goes on in a school, in a class and during a lesson.
4. Less time should be devoted to lecture and more active student-teacher involvement in pre-service training classes should be emphasized.
5. Curriculum revisions should focus on promoting trainees' language competence during formal training.
6. Self-evaluation can be utilized to help the trainee identify areas of strength and weakness and see the directions for future growth.
7. Induction period beyond the regular practicum is worth consideration, where student-teachers could put into action what they have learned without the pressure of being evaluated.

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